

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1-38 are pending in the application. These claims are cancelled by way of the present Preliminary Amendment, without prejudice. New claims 39-70 are added in place of claims 1-38.

Applicant believes that the new claims are in condition for allowance. Specifically, the references previously cited by the Examiner in the parent application do not teach or suggest, among other elements, *absorbent layers which are spaced apart from one another to provide exposed surface sections of the substrate between the absorbent layers*, as recited in independent claim 39. Moreover, these references do not teach or suggest such *exposed surface sections which provide wicking zones between proximate absorbent layers*, further recited in new independent claim 54. Further yet, these references do not teach or suggest such absorbent layers which are (1) *elongated segments*, (2) which has *rounded cross-sections*, and/or (3) which are situated in *elongated channels formed by the backsheet extending about the rounded contour of the segments*. Accordingly, each of claims 39-70 is patentable over the cited references.

Attached hereto is a clean version of the claims pending in the application, after the current amendment. The attached is captioned **“Clean Version of Pending Claims”**

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw any outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. The undersigned is available for telephone consultation if the Examiner believes such consultation will expedite prosecution of the application or resolve any outstanding issues.

Applicant believes no additional fees are due with this submission. However, if an additional fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 50-0997, under Order No. P01880US2 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw. Moreover, if any other Petition is required or if the appropriate Petition for Extension of Time does not accompany this Response, applicant hereby applies for said Petition and authorizes any fee associated therewith.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Alberto Q. Amatong, Jr.

Registration No.: 41,580

The Morris Law Firm, P.C.

10260 Westheimer, Suite 360

Houston, Texas 77042

Attorneys for Applicant

**CLEAN VERSION OF PENDING CLAIMS**

39. A disposable absorbent article comprising:
- a topsheet;
  - a backsheet; and
  - an absorbent core disposed therebetween;
- wherein said absorbent core is constructed of an absorbent composite including
- a plurality of absorbent layers of hydratable fine fibers in the form of microfibril obtained from cellulose or a derivative thereof, and super absorbent polymer (SAP) particles bonded together by said hydratable fibers; and
  - a nonwoven substrate supporting said absorbent layers;
- wherein said absorbent layers are spaced apart from one another to provide exposed surface sections of said substrate between absorbent layers.
40. The article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent layers are coated upon said substrate.
41. The article of claim 39, wherein said nonwoven substrate is a section of said backsheet.
42. The article of claim 39, wherein said backsheet is formed from said absorbent composite, said absorbent layer including a low cross link SAP adapted to gel block upon wetting such that said backsheet is substantially impervious when wet and said backsheet is breathable when dry.
43. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said SAP are water-swellaable particles provided in concentrations in the range of about 50g/m<sup>2</sup> to about 500 g/m<sup>2</sup>.
44. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent core includes a prefabricated sheet of said absorbent composite.
45. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said exposed surface sections form wicking zones between said absorbent layers.
46. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent layers are laterally spaced, elongated segments.

47. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent layer includes a low-crosslink, low gel strength SAP having free swell capacities of over 40 g/g and such that said absorbent layer is adapted to gel block upon wetting so as to be substantially impervious but is breathable when dry.

48. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent layers are provided in distinct, generally dotted concentrations having a width and a depth.

49. The absorbent article of claim 48, wherein said generally dotted concentrations have diameter width within the range of about 2 mm to about 20 mm, and wherein an average distance between proximate dotted concentrations is within about 1 mm to about 10 mm.

50. The absorbent article of claim 48, wherein said dotted concentrations are arranged in a staggered pattern.

51. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein an average width of said absorbent layers is between about 1 mm to about 15 mm, and an average distance between proximate absorbent layers is within about 1 mm to about 25 mm.

52. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said absorbent layers are provided in laterally spaced, elongated segments, said elongated segments including a wider section having a high concentration of SAP, said wider sections being positioned in a crotch region of the absorbent article.

53. The absorbent article of claim 39, wherein said backsheet provides said non-woven substrate supporting said absorbent layers, and wherein said absorbent layers are elongated segments having a rounded cross-section, said backsheet extending about the rounded underside contour of said segments, such that elongated channel structures are formed beneath said elongated segments in which said elongated segments are situated.

54. A disposable absorbent article comprising:
- a topsheet;
  - a backsheet; and
  - an absorbent core disposed therebetween;
- wherein said absorbent core is constructed of an absorbent composite including
- a plurality of absorbent layers of hydratable fine fibers in the form of microfibril obtained from cellulose or a derivative thereof, and super absorbent polymer (SAP) particles bonded together by said hydratable fibers; and
  - a nonwoven substrate supporting said absorbent layers, wherein said absorbent layers are coated upon said substrate;
- wherein said absorbent layers are spaced apart from one another to provide exposed surface sections of said substrate between absorbent layers, said exposed surface sections providing wicking zones between said absorbent layers.
55. The article of claim 54, wherein said nonwoven substrate is a section of said backsheet.
56. The article of claim 54, wherein said backsheet is formed from said absorbent composite, said absorbent layer including a low cross link SAP adapted to gel block upon wetting such that said backsheet is substantially impervious when wet and said backsheet is breathable when dry.
57. The absorbent article of claim 57, wherein said SAP are water-swellaable particles included in a concentration in the range of about 50g/m<sup>2</sup> to about 500 g/m<sup>2</sup>, said exposed surface sections providing predetermined expansion spaces into which said absorbent layers expand upon wetting.
58. The absorbent article of claim 54, wherein said absorbent core includes a prefabricated sheet of said absorbent composite.

59. The absorbent article of claim 54, wherein said absorbent layer includes a low-crosslink, low gel strength SAP having free swell capacities of over 40 g/g and such that said absorbent layer is adapted to gel block upon wetting so as to be substantially impervious but is breathable when dry.

60. The absorbent article of claim 54, wherein said absorbent layers are provided in distinct, generally dotted concentrations supported on said substrate.

61. The absorbent article of claim 60, wherein said generally dotted concentrations have diameters within the range of about 2 mm to about 20 mm, and-wherein an average distance between proximate dotted concentrations is within about 1 mm to about 10 mm.

62. The absorbent article of claim 60, wherein said dotted concentrations are arranged in a staggered pattern.

63. The absorbent article of claim 54, wherein an average width of said absorbent layers is between about 1 mm to about 15 mm and an average width of said wicking zones between proximate absorbent layers is within about 1 mm to about 25 mm.

64. The absorbent article of claim 54, wherein said absorbent layers are provided in laterally spaced, elongated segments, said elongated segments including a wider section having high concentration SAP.

65. The article of claim 54, wherein said backsheet provides a nonwoven substrate on which said absorbent layers are supported, said absorbent layers being spaced apart from one another on said substrate; and

wherein said absorbent layers are elongated segments having a rounded cross-section and said backsheet layer extends about the rounded underside contour of said segments, such that elongated channel structures are formed beneath said elongated segments in which said elongated segments are situated.

66. A disposable absorbent article comprising:
- a topsheet;
  - a backsheet; and
  - an absorbent core disposed therebetween;
- wherein said absorbent core is constructed of an absorbent composite including
- a plurality of absorbent layers of hydratable fine fibers in the form of microfibril obtained from cellulose or a derivative thereof, and super absorbent polymer (SAP) particles bonded together by said hydratable fibers; and
- wherein said backsheet provides a nonwoven substrate on which said absorbent layers are supported, said absorbent layers being spaced apart from one another on said substrate to provide exposed surface sections of said substrate between absorbent layers, said exposed surface sections providing wicking zones between said absorbent layers; and
- wherein said absorbent layers are elongated segments having a rounded cross-section and said backsheet layer extends about the rounded underside contour of said segments, such that elongated channel structures are formed beneath said elongated segments and in which said elongated segments are situated.
67. The article of claim 66, wherein said backsheet is formed from said absorbent composite, said absorbent layer including a low cross link SAP adapted to gel block upon wetting such that said backsheet is substantially impervious when wet and said backsheet is breathable when dry.
68. The absorbent article of claim 66, wherein said SAP are water-swellaable particles included in a concentration in the range of about 50g/m<sup>2</sup> to about 500 g/m<sup>2</sup>.
69. The absorbent article of claim 66, wherein said absorbent layer includes a low-crosslink, low gel strength SAP having free swell capacities of over 40 g/g and such that said absorbent layer is adapted to gel block upon wetting so as to be substantially impervious but is breathable when dry.
70. The absorbent article of claim 66, wherein an average width of said absorbent layers is between about 1 mm to about 15 mm, and an average width of said wicking zones between proximate absorbent layers is within about 1 mm to about 25 mm.